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The Relationship between Body and Soul from the Perspective of Freud's Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

The theme of separating the soul from the body created many concerns once it had been announced by René Descartes in his *Metaphysical Meditations and Passions of the soul*. We believe that Freud was able to bring something new in the philosophical thinking, overcoming the dualism between body and soul. Freud didn't look after a solution that would start from metaphysical principles, as Spinoza or Leibniz did, but he approached the dualism in its anthropological foundations. The great discovery of the psychoanalysis father was that of the innate human behaviours. First, Freud studied the instincts, which definitely are innate, and then he moved the analysis to the level with a relative innateness, where he discovered the extremely complex universe of drives (*Trieb*), like sexual drive, aggressive one, territorial or that of fear, and so on. The drives are the elements that feed the behaviours which are not only the result of learning, of education. To a large extent, behaviours and the drives that underlie them overlap the instincts; in this sense, nutrition can be the support for sexual drives or death instinct that Freud discovered during the First World War can become the support of the aggressive drives.

Up to Freud, the dispute was centred on the innate ideas in the context of the controversies between rationalist and empiricist philosophers. With Austrian thinker, the emphasis is on the preconceptual existential level: the basal behaviours. These ideas led C. G. Jung, whom Freud had called him "his beloved son", to the complex theory of archetypes as innate behavioural structures. These ideas had a great resonance in the anthropology of the twentieth century.

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Introduction

The modern era, initiated on the philosophical level by René Descartes, will launch a challenge by the theme of mind and body dualism. Until the nineteenth century, there were various metaphysical solutions to this challenge offered by Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, or Berkeley.

For the first time, Sigmund Freud raised the question of finding a practical solution, a concrete one, in order to exceed the paradoxes created by metaphysical solutions. The novelty of his approach came primarily from the fact that German thinker started from the standpoint of the physician, who studied the alteration of the relationship between mind and body in his clinical cases (for example, neurosis, hysteria and so on). Finally, through the discovery of the unconscious, the father of psychoanalysis would get to a true philosophy centered on the idea of innateness of the drives which provided intimate communication between mind and body.

Methods

In my analysis, I used the method of texts comparing in order to identify the path used by Freud to overcome the Cartesian dualism that separates in an irreconcilable manner the mind from the body. In the first chapter I will try to identify the sources that have exceeded the dualism, searching them in the German aestheticism space. In the second chapter I will prove that Freud identified the simultaneous coexistence of opposites in the ambivalent drives. In the third chapter I will demonstrate that psychoanalysis changed the perspective of innateness from the world of ideas to the world of instincts and drives.

In conclusion, I will outline Freud's original thinking about the innateness because this idea paved the way for his followers, one of the most important being Carl Gustav Jung, the creator of the idea of archetypes and of the collective unconscious.

The premises of exceeding the mind and body dualism

The dualism is the product of a binary thinking which functions only on two coordinates of the type 0 or 1. Such a way of thinking denies the unity of opposites. An exemplary form of dualism can be found in the famous contradiction between inclination and duty in Kant's philosophy. Only the action born out of duty, and which is rational and obeys to the categorical imperative, gets value; in the opposite corner, the feelings, or inclinations in general, were rejected by the philosopher of Königsberg from the field of moral accomplishment. Kant himself returns on this distinction in *The Critique of Judgment* where he states that a purely intellectual being (lacking sensibility) would not have the Beautiful and the sublime, as ways of esthetical representation. The pleasant also exists in the animals; the good is for any rational being; but the Beautiful is destined to the man only. Thus the esthetical judgment gives the true measure of the humane, being above all dualism as it crosses the distinction between duty and inclination, or, in simpler words, between good and pleasant.

Freud's contribution to the understanding of the relationship between mind and body in the context of his time

At the beginning of the 19th century, Schelling and Hegel imperatively announced the return to the Greek esthetical ideal, seen as the royal gate to the accomplishment of morality. Starting from the principle "*living beautifully is living morally*", the German aesthetics sensed that the paradigm based on the puritan morality was in obvious conflict with human nature which has an obscure, irrational side. The ancient were closer to the correct understanding of the relationship between rational and irrational, between consciousness and our unconscious, abysmal structures. The Olympic Games marked the cessation of all armed conflicts and had the role of "dressing" the gregarious instincts of aggression in a cultural "garment". The body of the warrior that became an athlete was the occasion of fulfilling an esthetical ideal, a model for the great sculptors of the time. The stadiums were rather small and the show was not meant as a business but aimed of regaining the harmony

between body and soul. On the other side, the Dionysian celebrations, the all sorts of orgies, the mysteries, showed the man hiding an instinctual, wild side which had to be allowed to manifest on certain occasions. Apollo and Dionysus, Demeter and Koré Persephone are the emblems of the Greek dualism, of that troubling opposition between rational and irrational, conscious and unconscious, light and darkness, life and death. The Greeks avoided setting clear borders between these extreme limits, leaving numerous portals through which they communicated, such as Pithy's prophecies or the psychodramas in the Eleusinian initiations.

Sigmund Freud understood Greek soul as he was firstly a physician and secondly a passionate spirit for the themes of the ancient mythology and philosophy. He stopped being afraid of focusing on things that the consciousness of the modern man had placed in obscurity. The discovery of the unconscious by means of the hypnosis, the capture of the missed acts and especially the interpretation of dreams convinced Freud of the great importance of the drives universe, of everything related to sexuality, aggression, power, fear, repression, transfer, or illicit tendencies of the sado-masochistic or violently Thanatic type. The unconscious is ambivalent, mostly absurd from the rational point of view. It is a place where body and soul can no longer be clearly distinguished as Descartes considered. The French philosopher, who can be considered as the father of the anthropological dualism, stated, in the *Metaphysical Meditations*, that the soul inhabits the body without being contaminated by it. In this respect, Descartes asserted:

"... there is a great difference between mind and body, in that this body, from its nature, is always divisible, while the mind is entirely indivisible. For, indeed, when I consider it, that is to say, when I consider myself, inasmuch as I am only a thing which thinks, I cannot distinguish in myself any parts, but I recognise and very clearly conceive that I am an absolute and entire entity. And although the whole mind appears united to the whole body, yet when a foot or an arm or some other part comes to be separated from it, I plainly recognise that, nevertheless, nothing has been taken from my mind; and the faculties of willing, of feeling, of perceiving, etc., cannot properly be called its parts, for it is the same mind which exerts itself wholly to will, and wholly to feel and to perceive, etc. ... the mind or soul of man is entirely different from the body..." (Descartes, 1901, pp. 220-221).

The theme of the separation of the soul from the body had created a multitude of misunderstandings since its statement by René Descartes in the *Metaphysical Meditations*. Sigmund Freud managed to bring something new to the world of thinking, leaving behind the dualism between body and soul. He restarts Descartes' research from the *Treatise on Passions of the Soul*, where the dualism is nuanced by the French philosopher who is forced to admit that the soul cannot inhabit the body like the sailor does his ship. Discovering the importance of the drives and the existence of the unconscious, in fact the supreme instance of the human *psyché*, the father of the psychoanalysis would re-evaluate the entire dualist vision of the European thinking based on the distinction between body and soul. Thus the drives, which can only appear in the context of the existence of the body, become in the psychoanalysis the true source of the energy of the human *psyché* named by Freud the *libido*. The *libido* links in fact body and soul in an indestructible unity. *Psyché* claims its force, energy and creativity as a result of the process of sublimation from the very basic sexual-aggressive drives. The sublimation, a process largely studied by Freud, especially in his works related to artists and works of art, captures the complex mechanism of converting an unconscious drive, having a sexual or aggressive content, into an artistic, philosophical or even religious creation, having apparently no relationship to the drives universe that generated it. In Physics and Chemistry, the sublimation means the passage of a body from the solid state directly to the gas state, overleaping the liquid state phase. In its alchemic definition, the sublimation is identified to the purification, process by means of which the subtle (volatile) matter sublimates, tends to rise, leaving in the vase the ground, rough, solid matter (Pop, 2002, p. 322). In psychoanalysis, the term of sublimation introduced by Freud targeted the application of the alchemic method on the sexual energies, acting by the reorientation of the sexual drives, deflecting them from their (purely) sexual objectives to more elevated purposes: "We call sublimation a certain way of modifying the purpose, as well as the change in object in which our social evaluation is considered" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1994, p. 419). The Freudian sublimation is identified with the

desexualization of the sexual drives by means of transforming the erotic drives into friendship, tenderness, etc. or by focusing the sexual energy towards intellectual, artistic or social activities. The Freudian sublimation can also find its origins in the sublime, term used especially in the field of fine arts in order to designate a work of art suggesting perfection, accomplishment. The moment the drives become desexualized, the energy they imply is converted into a work of art by the process of sublimation and the result is quantified by its participation to the sublime.

Dualism and ambivalence

Another interesting aspect of Freudian psychoanalysis is the overcoming of a dualist binary type thinking by the study of ambivalent states implying behaviours that take the form of a cultural response. A particular interest is presented, in this respect, by the *taboo* type ambivalence that short-circuits the human *psyché* by awakening certain *tensions* at an affective level, in which a certain thing is being loved and hated, feared but affectively close at the same time, etc. The leader, the dead, the enemy are only a few examples becoming ambivalent realities, in the face of which a dualist type thinking fails. The primitive protects himself by the introduction of the idea of *taboo*, equivalent of the sacred, and by construction of a psychological barrier between himself and the ambivalent reality, whose role is that of protecting against a mental destructuration. In the same context of the ambivalences, the book *Moses and the Monotheism* was born, transposing the author's own drama as he was passing through a profound identity crisis. Freud had been strongly involved in the drama of the First World War as two of his sons have had directly participated as officers on the battlefield. After that he was strongly influenced by the rise of Nazism as his sisters were deported to concentration camp, his own daughter, Ana, was under the investigation of Gestapo, and his own books were burn in front of the public. The father of the psychoanalysis had always considered himself as belonging to Austria and suddenly finds himself treated as a pariah thrown at the edge of the society. Just like Moses who, in Freud's vision, is an Egyptian turned Jew, he will be an Austrian turned Jew. His exile to England sealed this profound experience of the identity ambivalence.

By researching the active forces of the live matter, and not its morphology, Freud made an amazing discovery: there are two categories of drives, being “in opposition” - some tending towards death, and others, the sexual ones, looking for and managing to always renew life (Freud, 2011, p. 82). He launches the idea of the presence of the two fundamental drives (*Trieb*): *Eros* and *Thanatos*, sexuality and aggression. The term *Thanatos* is not met in Freud's works, but surely he used it in conversations. The use of the terms *Thanatos* and *Eros* emphasizes the universal principle character the two categories of drives get in Freud's way of thinking (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1994, p. 431). The Austrian psychoanalyst would bitterly admit however that man possesses an irresistible inclination towards death, destruction, the *Eros* being inevitably accompanied by the *Thanatos* that reveals the deepest, most profound forces of our nature, the huge potential of man's aggression, unique being who kills intraspecifically. When life, which is love, reproduction, multiplying, reaches its limits, the original thirst of the inorganic, of the initial state, of the initiation point, is awakened, just like for the plants, where after the apparition of the most beautiful flower, it must disappear, leaving its seeds in the ground for a new vital cycle. Freud was deeply troubled by this discovery especially because he hadn't even sensed so far, having developed only a theory of the *libido*, of the *Eros*. The *Eros* has its limits in the *Thanatos*; life tends towards death and vice versa: the inorganic creates the organic which returns to the inorganic. This cyclicity is registered like a pattern at the level of the deepest unconscious. By means of art, religion, psychology or philosophy, the conscious mind wants to suppress these dark instincts, reconverting them into creations he considers immortal, but their immortality is absolutely chimerical as it only serves to mitigate the anguish of the great discovery: any form of life is a sure path towards exhaustion, entropy, collapse. The eternity is not found in this world. The life of the spirit, the soul's reality, is also subject to metamorphoses.

Overcoming the dualism between mind and body by Freudian drives theory

Freud did not look for a solution starting from metaphysical principles, such as Spinoza or Leibniz, but approached the dualism in his very anthropological fundamentals. The great discovery of the father of the psychoanalysis was the innateness of human behaviours. First, Freud studied the instincts, which definitely are innate, then he passed on the analysis to a new level with a relative innateness, where he discovered the extremely complex universe of the drives (*Trieb*), like sexual drive, aggressive one, territorial or that of fear, and so on. The drives are the elements that feed the behaviors which are not only the result of learning, of education. To a large extent, behaviors and the drives that underlie them overlap the instincts; in this respect, nutrition can be the support for sexual drives or death instinct, discovered by Freud during the First World War, can become the support of the aggressive drives.

Conclusion

Up to Freud, the dispute upon dualism was centered on the innateness of ideas, whose origin was considered either innate or acquired by conventions assumed by the subject. With the initiation of psychoanalysis, the accent fell on the preconceptual existential level: the basal behaviors. These ideas led C. G. Jung to the complex theory of archetypes as innate behavioral structures and after that psychoanalysis would have a large echo in the 20th century anthropology.

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